MUTINY

A PAPER OF ANARCHISTIC IDEAS & ACTIONS

ISSUE #48 - MARCH 2010

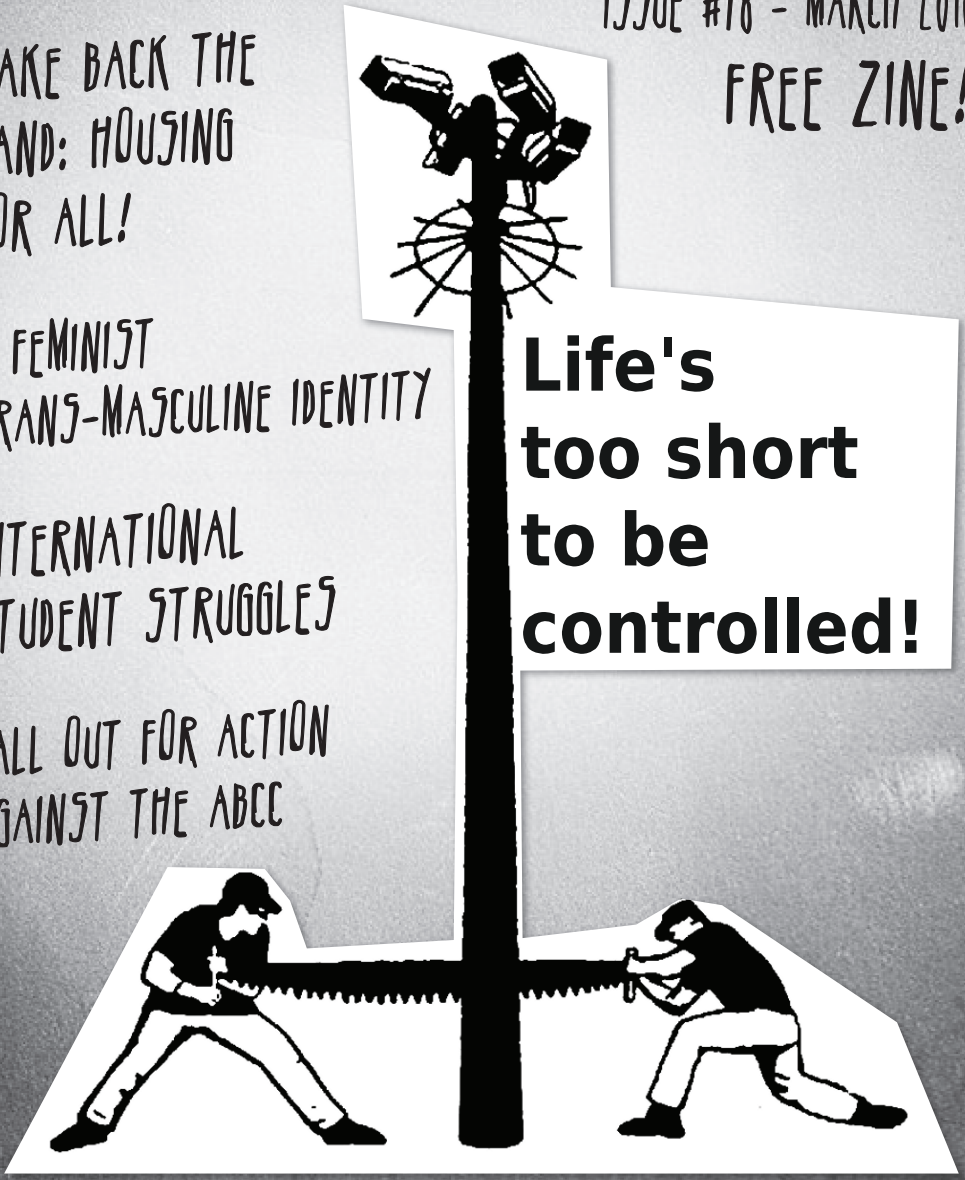
FREE ZINE!

TAKE BACK THE LAND: HOUSING FOR ALL!

A FEMINIST TRANS-MASCULINE IDENTITY

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT STRUGGLES

CALL OUT FOR ACTION AGAINST THE ABCC



Life's too short to be controlled!

MUTINY

is an anarchist collective based in Sydney. We started this zine to explore different avenues of disobedience & resistance, & to encourage people to write about their ideas, actions & experiences.

We meet regularly, please contact us on the address below:

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Brief News

Ilpeye Ilpeye

On February 1, the Rudd government acquired freehold ownership of the Aboriginal town camp of Ilpeye Ilpeye, located on the outskirts of Alice Springs, in Australia's Northern Territory. The Labor government compulsorily acquired the Ilpeye Ilpeye land, establishing a new benchmark in its aggressive agenda of opening up areas presently owned and controlled by Aboriginal communities for unrestrained capitalist exploitation - particularly by the resource and tourism industries - under the auspices of the Northern Territory "emergency intervention".

Supposedly the Ilpeye Ilpeye community will receive "just terms compensation" for the land, but this amount is yet to be determined. Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin has indicated that like the other 17 Alice Springs camps, Ilpeye Ilpeye will receive Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) funds. But the government is not obligated to provide similar funds to other Aboriginal communities if it compulsorily acquires them in the future.

Sydney

Star City Workers Strike - For the past 8 months, workers of the Tabcorp owned Star City Casino have been fighting for better working conditions through one hour work stoppages. Star City are offering their staff enterprise agreements with a pay rise in the first year of only 2%. The agreement also cuts conditions. The revenue for the casino for the last quarter was up 11.6%, and $575 million is being forked out on renovations to the facility.The Staff have rejected the offer three times, but management keep coming back with the same deal.

Greece

There was a general strike in Greece on February 24th, in response to austerity measures introduced by the Socialist government under pressure from the European Union - as a response to Greece's 'debt crisis'. In Athens, the main demonstration for the general strike was 20-30,000 strong. The anarchist blocks were large; selected smashing of banks occurred along with the looting of a corporate bookshop (books were distributed en mass to demonstrators and passers-by). Other actions include the occupation of the Government gazette and the occupation of several ministries in Thessaloniki. The austerity measures include a freeze on public pay increases, an increase in the retirement age from 61 to 63 and tax hikes for workers. And these are likely just the beginning. The Greek struggle is particularly important as there is a possibility it might spread to other European countries, particularly Portugal, Italy and Spain, where similar measures are being introduced.

One statement, produced by participants in the strike, argues that: "It's been making headlines the world over: the greek economy is in crisis, the times call for unity, the nation is in trouble... What an image: the revolted of December 2008 to be showing the way of obedience, succumbing to austerity plans, to the economists' expertise. When they say "austerity plan", we hear a tear gas cannister explode. When they show us the deficit figures we see protests banned, the hanging threat of unemployment; fascist dogs howling around migrant scapegoats. By now we know. When they say "national unity", we hear "social war".

There is a corporate media blackout on information as a lot of the workers have been on strike! Check out Occupied London (www.occupiedlondon.org) and Libcom (www.libcom.org) for information.

United States

Olympia, Washington - Students occupied Evergreen State College Housing Community Centre for 36 hours, posting a communique on February 20 saying that the group is "disheartened, discouraged and frustrated" by the realisation that they have been paying tuition to follow rules they had no say in creating, and that they have thus "commandeer[ed] the facilities that we are paying for."

"Everything that we paid for is ours, everything is ours. It's right there in front of you, waiting for the intention, the desire and the effort." The message

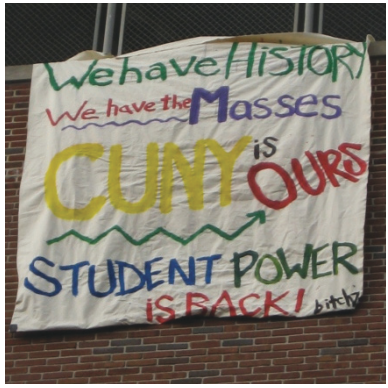
closes with a slogan that has been frequently used in recent California campus takeovers: "Occupy Everything. Demand Nothing." During the 36 hour action, students ran a twitter feed, organised workshops and a concert.

United States

On March 4th, in response to fee increases of 32% in the UC systems, there were attempts at occupations of universities across California, as well as in New York State and in 30 other states. The economic crisis has been used as an excuse for rolling back public services.

A speech from one of the occupiers argued that: The strikes and occupations which our movement advances are acts of self defense by the Students and Workers of this University against the systematic violence being perpetrated against us.

Importantly, it included campuses with little previous history of activism and struggle; for instance at San Diego, Irvine, Riverside, Santa Barbara and Davis. All of these schools saw attempts by at least several hundred students. At Santa Cruz pre-dawn picket lines closed the entrances to the campus and were held even against violent attempts by drivers to break through, including one attempt by the driver of a Prius that broke a picketer's leg. Many campus workers, instead of getting angry at another "student protest", respected the strike by joining the picket lines or by defying supervisors (and police escorts) and claiming that they couldn't get through the picket lines. In Oakland, around 1000 students from Berkeley joined students and teachers from public schools, community colleges, and CSUs for a mid-day rally at City Hall. The marchers managed to get onto Interstate 880, a freeway going through the most working-class sections of Oakland, where 150 were arrested.



More info at occupyca.wordpress.com/ and www.libcom.org

Call-out for submissions - Reflections on moments in Australian activism, an anthology

Were you at Woomera, Baxter, Pine Gap, APEC, Sii, G20, Climate Camp? Have you been involved in the struggle for old-growth forests, land rights, attended a coal port blockade, an activist conference / convergence, or been involved in a solidarity campaign? Did you write about your personal experiences? Journal entries, blogs, zine pieces, jotted down thoughts, articles for Indymedia?

We are looking for submissions for a new anthology of articles or stories written by activists about their personal experiences of the events that have shaped Australia's recent activist hystory. Preferably pieces that were written at the time of, or close to, the event, although if not they will still be considered. Please inform us of any copywright we should be aware of.

The anthology will be the first non-newspaper production of Black Kite Press, a small independent press based in Central Australia, aimed at publishing Australian radical hystories and grassroots voices. We aim for it to be a tool with which Australian activists can reflect on past events in our recent hystory and learn from the successes, the crises, the differences and divisions, and the moments of inspiration and growth.

Please send ideas, questions and submissions to blackkitepress@gmail.com before 31 March 2010.

Black Kite Press

Call out for direct action against the draconian ABCC

The Australian building and construction commission was established in the package of Howard's IR Laws, in an effort to combat worker militancy in the construction sector. Worker militancy in this sector is high, it's dangerous work (complemented by incredible employer negligence): approximately one construction worker dies on the job per week in Australia.

The powers of the ABCC allow it to request interrogations of anyone involved in 'illegal' activity on a work site - generally 'illegal' stoppages. If you refuse to go to the interrogation, you're charged and face 6 months jail or a $22k fine. If you don't provide them with documents they request, you're charged. If you don't rat out fellow workers, you're charged.

At the moment, Adelaide construction worker Ark Tribe is being prosecuted by the ABCC, because he refused to be interrogated. He signed a petition drawn up on a paper towel at his worksite at Flinders University regarding the appalling safety conditions on site. For this he and his workmates were called in for interrogation. He goes to trial in July.

The response of trade unions reflects the weakness within the union bureaucracy: succumbing to apparently 'peaceful means' of demonstration against what is clearly a violent offensive begun by the previous government, and continued under the current one. They suggest online support, when workers are being interrogated and threatened; they suggest writing to an MP when workers blood is being spilt. What will this do? Nothing! Workers will continue to be victimized, and the government's indifference will continue! We need to organize for practical solidarity. This attack can't be fought with the just words, but actions.

Further, this isn't just an attack on construction workers: the ABCC came as part of anti-worker legislation brought in by the Howard government, which has been left relatively untouched by the Rudd government, save a name change. Together, workers, students and the unemployed can challenge this legislation; together, we can win, if we don't fight, we lose.

This is a call for action around May Day against the ABCC, to demand the charges against Ark Tribe be dropped, and to demand the abolition of the ABCC. May day is on a Saturday, so any actions against offices of the ABCC, or Fair work, or the ALP, should be on the Friday before, or Monday after.

"Ark will spend the next few months with the possibility of up to six months imprisonment hanging over his head." Long live the struggle!

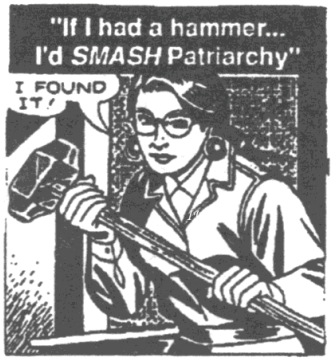
This call to action is supported by: Organise! Adelaide's Anarchist communist group

a feminist trans-masculine identity

by griffen

This article was written for the upcoming F conference (a feminist meeting in Sydney). It tries to open discussion and debate; and critically engage with some problematic concepts within the feminist movement.

I wanted to write about my relationship to feminism, as a trans-masculine person. I identify as a queer transgender masculine person who has in the past, identified as a queer woman. My feminist politics have strengthened and solidified throughout my transition, despite the fact that I no longer identify as a woman. I think that my realisation of, and my acceptance of my own masculine identity has transpired partly because of this consolidation.



I've never held a feminist politic that sees everything male and masculine as anti-feminist and the root of all sexism. Rather, I've always seen capitalism - as a system and a social relation – as the architect of patriarchy. Or rather, patriarchy and misogyny are necessary elements of this brutal class society that sees the wealth and privilege concentrated in the hands of a few. The institutions of marriage and the family, which are central to the maintenance of capitalism, all uphold sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

In coming to terms with my trans identity, I decided that if I was going to identify as trans* masculine person and use male pronouns, then it was imperative that I actively practice my feminist politic. I've been compelled to be wholly aware of the ways in which socialised masculinity serves to reinforce patriarchy and sexism. When it comes to the day-to-day passing as male, I consciously wanted to ensure that the male I embodied was not one that zealously upheld sexism. It is often that the aspects that stand out so much when thinking of masculinity and male-ness, are those that are, in many ways, anti-feminist. This hegemonic masculinity is comprised entirely of gender stereotypes, such as: taking up space in a room, talking loudly over people and talking a lot [as though what you have to say is always of the utmost importance], and a rejection of the feminine. Whilst I don't identify as a man – I identify as trans and I celebrate my gender trajectory, passing as male can constitute a recognition of my trans identity. It can also be a question of safety, as often problems arise, including violence, if people can't identify your gender. And simply, I also want to pass.

The big question or contradiction that arose for me was figuring out ways of embodying a masculinity and a male-ness that I was comfortable with and that did not represent or feed into a hegemonic masculinity.

Being aware of, and owning my masculine privilege has become particularly imperative for me since I decided that I wanted to start taking Testosterone [T]. Before making this decision, part of my reluctance to start taking T, was truly being perceived as a man by other women. I consider there to be a certain sense of

trust and solidarity between women that can exist and I think there is amazing strength in this. I want to recognise here that, as bell hooks proposes, this isn't always the case, as the intersections of race, class and sexuality mean that not all women share a common experience.

Before I started taking T, I very rarely completely passed. As my body slowly changes and I begin to fit the characteristics that broader society associate with being a man, I've begun to pass more. The more I pass, the more of this instant solidarity and trust I lose. It's not as though I'm sad because I've been kicked out of some club - my immediate community is full of amazing queer women and trans* folk – it means that I need to learn new ways of gaining trust and solidarity with women. I need to learn how to be a man and to reconcile my revolutionary politics with this. I've realised that I can't be the trans man that I want to be, without owning and working against my masculine privilege, celebrating femininity and continuing to a be a feminist ally to women and other feminine folk, who are forced to deal with sexist shit everyday.

It is there that I want to point to the strength and necessity in recognising the interconnection of a women's liberation movement and a trans liberation movement. I also want to note that I'm in no way suggesting that in order to become a 'better feminist' people need to identify as trans and nor do I think that every trans person practices amazing feminist politics. Similarly, I'm not suggesting that my past identification as a woman means that I'm a 'better equipped' feminist than, for example, a cis-gendered* man. Rather I'm suggesting that a feminist struggle and a trans struggle, complement and inform each other in necessary ways. The extension of the gender system beyond the binary, which is so heavily entrenched and maintained under capitalism, assists both trans folk and women. What it creates is the space for new identities and bodies that can be embraced outside of those afforded to us by the capitalist patriarchy, such as the celebration of fat identities [check out the Fat Femme Front collective here in Sydney for an inspiring example].

I just want to leave you with a quote from the inspiring Leslie Feinberg, an amazing transgender activist, speaker and author. The quote is taken from ze's 'Trans Liberation: beyond pink or blue', in which ze articulates, among other points, the interconnection between gender discrimination and sexism:

"The struggles with those of us at this conference also overlap with the struggles of the women's liberation movement. We could gain strength by working together, along with all our allies, to fight for sex and gender freedom. That means the rights of people to define their sex, control their own body, and develop their gender expression, free from violence, economic barriers, or discrimination – in employment, housing, health care, or any other sector of society.
None of us can be free while others are in chains. That's the truth underlying the need for solidarity. Trans liberation is inextricably linked to other movements for equality and justice."

• Trans is a general term, referring to transgender, transsexuals, genderqueer and gender-variant folks, whose gender identities are not attributable to their 'assigned sex'.
• Cis-gendered describes those whose gender identity is aligned with their 'assigned sex'.

International Student Struggles

Transnational Economies, Guest Consumers and Processes of Restructuring

by Ben Rosenzweig

Anecdotal introduction

A few months ago I was looking for a share-house room in Melbourne, where rents have gone up a lot in the last couple of years. I kept coming across people advertising places who would explain, sometimes with a little laugh, that they were planning on getting an international student in if possible, given the size of the rooms (microscopic, phone booths, walk-in closets, disused bathrooms) and the rent (not microscopic by any means). Most of those I spoke to were not multi-property slum-landlord-types; they were people renting or buying houses, 'ordinary' share-house people, even (Australian) other students, who now saw an opportunity to make a chunk of cash.

In very real if broad senses, those in Melbourne on international student visas face not merely employers as exploiters: they face almost the entire array of social relations in Melbourne as a predatory world re-made as a Hobbesian market just for them – the social sweatshop, the war of all against them.

New social objects

The development of these international education economies should be understood as a moment of a restructuring of relations of exploitation, of the social relations of capitalism, for which 'neoliberalism' and 'globalisation' are common if inadequate terms – the emergence of new forms of subsumption of labour under capital on a planetary basis. In particular, this has altered the division of the global cycle of capital into national areas of accumulation, and reconstituted the form and imperatives of states within the expansion of capital and reproduction of capitalism.

International education economies are the biggest source of export income in Victoria, by a substantial margin. Within Australia, international education economies developed through a number of stages. After being given the ability to charge enormous fees to international students, and as part of a much broader neoliberal reconstitution of the social relations defining institutions, universities started to become what might be thought of as properly capitalist institutions, selling education and training and the credentials supposed to attest to same, in the sense outlined by Marx in the 'excluded chapter' of Capital:

> A schoolmaster who educates others is not a productive worker. But a schoolmaster who is engaged as a wage labourer in an institution along with others, in order through his labour to valorise the money of the entrepreneur of the **knowledge-mongering institution**, is a productive worker.

As the social relations of institutions were reorganised as competitive markets centred on income generation, profit from international markets ran far ahead of the capacity of most institutions to generate income from (the formation of) 'domestic markets', i.e from the development of intellectual property, or by contracting out academic research work. A generation of profit made possible by systems of border control – by forms of violent exclusion that make possible new commodifications of mobility and of real and potential access to conditions of social reproduction (at least nominally) available to (some) of those judged to be within the borders of Australian territory and citizenship.

Thus these shifts included the developing ability to sell much more than these limited commodities of knowledge and accreditation, and the development of a massive private sector (colleges and the like

founded solely on international students). And as part of these, there was a shift in who came, and how they got here. And more recently, shifts in the ways in which these economies bleed into surrounding social relations and institutions, the ways in which states and others seek to mediate the reproduction of such economies on a number of levels.

The specificities of the integration of the Australian state into global political economy is now ever-increasingly founded upon our integration into precisely these economies, a niche in world markets which re-makes and covertly commodifies the border and citizenship amongst many other things, as a certification point, a transit point, a control point, sometimes a destination, helping to define the movements of people in ever-changing but hardly arbitrary directions.

Social power

Many of the people who seemed able to wipe out a chunk of 'our' international education economies with a few protests in the middle of last year had already taken public collective action. The same people (male Indian students) in the same place (Melbourne streets) about the same thing (violence). Despite being relatively large, wildcat, 'militant', disruptive - a very very public spectacle of angry brown men, some with shirts off, occupying a major city street for hours - the earlier actions seemed to have consequences much smaller than subsequent events (unless understood as a causal precursor to the late events), more-or-less disappearing from "public" view with the cessation of collective disruptive action.

And yet the only substantial difference was in how the event was framed: taxi drivers the first time, international students the second.

The reason was not difficult to spot: the second round of 'international student' actions were experienced as a much more direct threat to recruitment to Australia's largest non-mining industry.

Interestingly, in India a parallel view of media coverage was put forward by a Left party:

> Remember that not long ago, taxi drivers of Indian and Pakistini origin had protested in Melbourne against police indifference to a series of attacks on them. That story had not been highlighted much by the corporate Indian media because it made less interest copy for elite India than the attacks on "people like us".

What are these people? I'm suggesting, now, that it is absurd to try to reduce the social positioning of those who took action, or international students, or sub-sections of thereof, to being simply ethnically Indian (Chinese, Nepalese, whatever), or being students, or being generic workers (even 'migrant workers'). And not because it is always reductive to force complex individuals into simple categories – I don't care about that at all.

Rather, all of these are inadequate because they are wrong, because they fail to engage with the realities of those under discussions, with the social relations in which they really operate and thus with what they really are. Obviously they may work, study, come from India/China/Nepal.

I'm saying that these are guest consumers in new transnational economies which reach into and redefine Australian territory, border, citizenship, economy and social reproduction - moments of restructuring of exploitation which changes the experience of work and of 'proletarian identity'. The imperatives which generated these programs were not to find people who can be made to work, not to hyper-exploitable labor, but rather people who can be made to pay. Of course, with the expansion of such economies, these guest consumers now form the basis of multiple economies – producing people defined not as essences or members of some occupational or cultural group, but as conflictually-constituted moments in an ensemble of social relations. Legal and

immigration status, education, housing, work, healthcare – markets, institutions and conditions collectively making up a new and separate space. Work is the form of economic survival and point of exploitation, but not, for quite material reasons, a privileged identity.

A new exclusion is possible

What we might only partially inaccurately refer to as 'international education economies' are made up of overlapping, competing and conflicting interests –of institutions (most obviously universities, private colleges, recruitment agencies) and states (Australian federal and state governments, Indian and Chinese governments). For a while any conflicts seemed to be blunted by joy derived from the expansion of capital, but in recent times conflicts have emerged. Resistance led to recruitment problems, which led to a re-assertion of state management and planning - uneven and sometimes tentative but across the social terrain of these political economies.

If state governments experience these economies primarily as sources of revenue, the federal government occupies a slightly different position, with additional imperatives. As I write the federal government is remaking them, slicing out many of the least wealthy international students and sacrificing some proportion of the private colleges. To some extent it publicly appears as a re-assertion of federal labor market management in immigration policy and border regulation, covering an effort at reconstitution of guest consumer economies. This is alongside Victorian government efforts to diversify sources of guest consumers to ameliorate their fragility (and undermine the power of guest consumers).

The new urgency for expansion, and into new markets, is both an attempt to "replace" those who will no longer come to Australia: ie a response to declining recruitment following the protests and publicity surrounding violence against international students and college closures, and a form of risk management.

Many of the problems of the industry are attributed to consequences of one fact: many of the students coming here are not, to put it in a nutshell, rich. Quite the opposite. By developing "new markets" centred on recruitment of elites from a variety of countries, governments can begin a process of regulation and exclusion, over time, without wiping out the guest consumer-based economies. Thus, the federal government is trying to shift, at least at the edges, the basis of these economies by changing the content of the commodities sold, in order to manage problems.

But the reconstitution of these commodities is also the redefinition of legitimacy, a redistribution of exclusion and criminalization, and of formal or de facto expulsion. There is a new pattern of massive debt in parts of India and elsewhere, as some guest consumers, now dispensed with, face having virtually destroyed the economic basis of family reproduction for decades to come as payment, on credit, for effectively worthless 'education'.

Multicultural patriotism

Meanwhile, Victorian police are threatening and intimidating Indians with a view to silencing complaints about racially-motivated attacks. Students calling up are threatened with deportation if they give false information by 'disbelieving' police. Taxi drivers repeatedly attacked by groups of people are told to shut up, that they can be charged with offences too, that they should just let things go or else. While it is difficult to know exactly why or how frequently this is occurring, and whether it is a quiet directive from on high or the initiative of police not wanting to be held responsible for the loss of millions of 'export dollars', or just bigotry, the result is the same: police working hard to minimise problems (for the industry, for government).

The Indian groceries which grew with student numbers are finding it more and more difficult to survive as Indian students no longer leave their homes at night, and thus no longer shop. At its worst, they are almost experiencing their lives as a state of siege.

Though they make up less than half of the 'international students' in Australia, by the new-found prominence of their protests, victimhood, and subsequent social visibility, male Indian students have become associated with those in Australia on student visas in general.

The central axis of this violence is that of citizen against non-citizen, even if in reality this manifests as that of particular (groups of) citizens against particular (groups of) non-citizens. Some have sought to find in any acts of 'anti-student' violence committed by non-whites, by non-Anglos, a refutation of any accusation of 'racism' against 'mainstream Australians' (understood as whites), if not proof of the 'racism' of specifically non-white Australians and hence an indication of the 'failure of multiculturalism'. As if hatred of international students is an ancient hatred imported into this country by migrants – recreating that hatred of Indians so prominent in, say, Somalia.

In reality such violence does exist in relation to the 'success' of 'multiculturalism' as a state-sponsored project of management and nation-building. People from 'diverse' backgrounds can articulate xenophobia in the terms of multicultural patriotism, of the divisions of citizen and non-citizen within which official 'anti-racism' is constituted. Black, brown or white, we are all Australians – except for those who aren't. In this case, the guest consumers.

The resulting fear is directly related to defeat: as consequences of guest consumer struggle turn out to be more harassment and violence and mass expulsion at the bottom end of the socio-economic scale, the obvious collective actions dissipated. This left a space of representation which could be seized, by FISA and others, and converted into political capital, and a claim to NGO funding and/or multicultural corporatist 'inclusion'.

Final remarks

In a very real way the recent shifts in the role of states in these economies are responses to the resistance of guest consumers. Moreover, they have effectively undermined, if not defeated, the movements of guest consumers as they have appeared over the last couple of years.

Resistance has been defeated, at least temporarily, by a combination of increased violence and enhanced fear, and the threat and reality of a wave of expulsions. This is primarily of the least wealthy, enacted through visa changes of the sort pushed by the CFMEU and regulation and enforcement of the sort pushed by the National Union of Students.

The national regulation of labor and labor-market formation – almost all the ALP has retained from social democracy– has always been compatible (to put it mildly) with xenophobia, and with the overt reduction of 'foreigners' to economic utility.

I would suggest that it is not desirable to analyse developments from narrow perspectives, of the sad loss of the fantasy-university or the need to resuscitate social democracy, for example, which in any case tend to be, overtly or not, based on demands for new border policing and exclusion.

Rather they should be seen as moments of restructuring, restructuring-as-class-struggle, with conflict defining points of the global flows of capitalist reproduction and accumulation. To understand the restructuring of which our struggles are a part – that would be a worthy goal.

Take Back the Land: Housing for All!

[Max Remo from Take Back the Land, Miami, interviewed by Liz Turner]

Can you explain what your day to day work is for Take Back the Land?

We scout for vacant government owned and foreclosed homes, find out what condition they are in, and then we assess them and give them a ranking. Then another group of people find out if they are individually owned or, if it's foreclosed or government owned, we put them on our list. So a lot of what we do is researching; it's figuring out what to do. Families get in contact with us to let us know what situation they are in and if they want our help. Then we have a conversation with them to find out if we are a match for them. A lot of the time families do not accept the services that we offer and sometimes we can't accept the families because they do not meet our guidelines. We spend time developing theory around what we are doing and why we are doing it. And planning out what we are doing – either moving in another family or the next phase of our struggle. Lately we have been spending more time building a national take back the land movement than we have on some of the local things, so lately we have been struggling with what percentage of time we are going to spend doing national work vs local work.

How many families have you helped and how do the families engage with the campaign and with the organisation?

We have directly ourselves moved in 11 families. And we have helped 3 families with technical assistance to move in themselves. We also have hooked up several individuals with local organisations doing similar work, we don't always know how those turn out. We are all volunteers, we are a very small group of people that do things that we feel are necessary in this political day and age. So as other organisations take on this work they will be able to fully integrate the people that they move in, into an organisation and have them integrate into their campaigns. Right now we've got a couple of families who have helped us out with some of the other move ins or with some of the families to help them deal with issues associated with squatting, but we have not had a program of fully integrating the families with the work that we are doing. Really this happens because we have no funding therefore we don't have staff.

You mentioned that you were trying to make this a national campaign, What's going on on the first of May?

The US Human Rights Network which is a national network of about 300 organisations using human rights as a framework for their work, whether it's around housing or police brutality or whatever. The US Human Rights Network has called for a national Take Back The Land movement and has had a number of organisations already sign on and many more going through their decision making process to decide if they are going to sign on. In May 2010 there will be a national month of action where organisations are encouraged to do two things: one is to liberate housing – to get houses that are boarded up or closed up and make them available for human use. The second thing is to defend people who are already in housing and are going to get evicted – that means doing blockades and being

willing to take arrests in order to defend those families. These will take place in at least four venues: several family homes like Take Back the Land does; buildings like Picture the Homeless does in New York City; Public Housing like the Committee to Protect Public Housing does in Chicago and the fourth will be vacant land which could include shanty towns, community farms or any number of things.

Is there a tension between direct action on the one hand and lobbying and media on the other, we were talking before that the two rely on one another?

I think frankly there is a tension and there is not going to be a way where there is no tension at all. But some level of tension is healthy because the people who are involved in direct action but are not engaged in making policy decisions could have a natural tendency to engage in increasingly escalating direct action which does not result in concrete wins for the majority of people. Even were Take Back the Land to take over more units the only thing we are doing is moving in individual families and there are literally hundreds of thousands of families who need help in the United States. The scope of this crisis is as much proof as anything that there needs to be a fundamental policy shift around making housing a human right. That has to happen on the public policy side. And on the opposite side there is a danger that the public policy people are just going for victories, but not necessarily victories that will be grounded politically or ideologically and therefore could look like progress, but really not represent much progress at all, and be too reformist to mean anything. So the two are going to have a tension because they have a natural tendency to go in opposite directions but the tension is what makes them benefit one another. So the direct action has to create space where public policy wins and the public policy has to make wins based on what the direct action is doing in the space that it's creating. The challenge is to figure out a way to work together because the movement is not about direct action or public policy, the movement is about advancing human conditions.

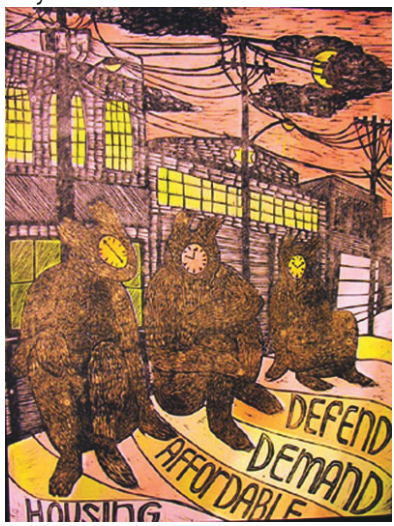
When you talk about housing as a human right you talk about land trusts and cooperative, what does that mean, what is the thing that you are calling for, how would it translate on paper and in practice if housing was recognised as a human right – not just for the UN but for actual American law?

Some of those things I haven't figured out because I'm not a public policy expert. And quite frankly I don't want to be a public policy expert I want to do direct action. In addition I think that this is a public policy struggle that has to happen society wide I don't think that I can sit here on a perch and say this is what should happen. With that said I think several things have to happen – short term, squatting has to be decriminalised. There is enough people doing it and enough need for it that it's completely ridiculous to say that someone is breaking the law if they choose to live in a vacant home rather than to live under a bridge. There are hundreds of thousands of vacant homes and the only ones who can afford to buy those homes right now, given lines of credit and the amount of unemployment, are banks! Banks don't need homes to survive but human beings do. Banks can afford to buy a home but human beings can't. All the laws now are designed to protect banks, I think those laws have to shift so that their primary determinate about someone's ability to get into a home has to be their status

as a human being not how much money they have. I think laws have to be human centred rather than corporate centred. And that's what the fight is actually about. I do want to say that what's going to have to happen at the end of this process is that we are going to have a massive handover of vacant homes from the budget lines of corporations over to community corporation or land trusts – whatever entities happen to be developed that would allow communities to make decisions about their land and how it gets used.

Do you want to say what is going to happen tomorrow?

On December 10th is international human rights day and in honour of that we are having a rally and a protest to demand that housing be elevated to a human right and we think that is the call for this era we think that housing needs to be elevated to a human right, so calling for that on an international human rights day and the way that's playing itself in the united states is that people do not have that. We are protesting in two different ways that are coming together – one is against the idea that banks get billions of dollars of bailout money because they were in financial trouble but when human beings are in financial trouble they don't get any bailout, they lose their home. We are going to Wells Fargo which is one of the biggest banks in the united states, that received 25 BILLION dollars worth of bailout money and despite that in Miami Day county alone Wells Fargo owns over 500 homes that are vacant because they are foreclosed and they have hundreds more that are in the process of foreclosure. Wells Fargo are able to remain in business because they got billions of dollars from the government but it has been cutting no slack whatsoever to the people who live in those homes and in a real way, in a tangible way, the people who Wells Fargo is foreclosing on and evicting from their homes paid the tax money that went to bailout Wells Fargo. In a very cruel irony. So we are protesting Wells Fargo that they either give us the $25 billion so we can provide our own housing or that they give us the vacant homes in Miami bay county.



Is there anything else that you want to add?

Globally we are entering a very unique time in history, because of the nature of the economic crisis, people are rethinking what their relationship is to land and to housing. Frantz Fanon, who was a great African philosopher said that every generation must out of relative obscurity determine it's mission and must either achieve the mission or betray it: our mission is to in our lifetime elevate housing to the level to a human right. Now we have to decide are we willing to struggle and fight for that or are we going to turn our backs to that. We are urging everyone with a good conscious to join the fight.

It's going to depend on locations and opportunities and the capacities of the communities. What we are doing in Miami is very different to what we are doing in New York, California and Chicago which is different from what people are doing in Australia. The way we developed Take Back the Land Miami is by looking at 2 models – one is in Brazil, the MST, and in South Africa the Western Cape Anti Eviction campaign. They serve as models for us but they do things very differently.

What's the level of self organisation like generally?

There's not a high level for a number of reasons – one of them is because the NGO community is highly professionalised so it makes it difficult for self-organised communities to compete with a highly organised sector right next to it. It has helped in many regards, but in other regards it has really hurt because it means that a professional class of people are advancing the movement rather than the people who are directly impacted. I think the other thing is that life is so hectic, hard and expensive that it makes it hard for people to do things that aren't directly contributing to their own survival – either by working all the time or by being so shell-shocked by the realities that they are self medicating and avoiding dealing with these issues. I think a lot of that was deliberate in fact, they had some of those in the Kerner report which was written right after the big urban rebellions in the 1960s – they talked about ways of minimising the possibilities of urban rebellion and one of them was to not provide housing and comfort to people so people can't just sit around all day and think about what kind of problems they have, but to keep them too busy.

R.A.A.F.
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With Richard Downs, from the Ampilatwatja walk-off against the NT intervention, Walkley Award winning journalist Colm McNaghton, Dimity Hawkins on uranium and the Nuclearn Non-Proliferation Treaty, Dave Kerin & Davie Thomason, ex- Builders Laborers Federation & Union Solidarity, Margaret Craegh & Peter Riley on the Tramways dispute, Iain MacIntryre on unemployed workers organising and eviction resistances.
April 24th - 26th 2010
Plus planning for actions, games, films & music in a relaxed bush setting.
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Email: renegadeactivist@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Black Rose film screening: Fantastic Mr Fox
7pm, 22 Enmore Rd, Newtown.

22 [Enmore Rd] Third Birthday bonanza party!
March 26th come celebrate 3 years of Black Rose, TuTu and Little Fish
check out:

www.blackrosebooks.org

People's Blockade of the World's Biggest Coal Port
Horseshow beach, Newcastle, March 28th from 10am Protest against Australia's biggest contribution to the climate crisis.

Sheila Autonomista Festival March 31-April 5th
an independent, non-profit, queer women's art and music festival.
check out http://scooter.org.au/sheila.html for details

INSIDE THIS MONTH:

Take Back the Land: Housing for All!
interview with Max Remo from Take Back the Land, Miami.

A Feminist Trans-Masculine Identity
a personalised analysis of the intersections between feminism and trans struggles.

International student struggles
a look at 3 years of organising by international students, and how the state and capital has restructured in order to deal with them.